

**PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING July 16, 2024**  
**MINUTES**

The July 16, 2024, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:30 p.m.

**Attendees:** Committee Members Zachary Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Jennifer Arsenault, and Alan Mitchell. Absent: Amy Hullett, Council members Justin McCarthy and Kathy Weier.

**Agenda.** The draft agenda was approved unanimously.

**Public Forum.** No person was present to comment.

**Minutes.** The draft June 2024 Minutes were approved unanimously.

**Hockey Rink Netting.** The Committee reviewed an email from resident Jackie Janosz to the Parks Committee stating that they have had pucks from the hockey rink fly across the street to their property and strike their garage and cars. She asked whether the city might put up some netting to avoid having the pucks fly out of the rink near the north goal. The Committee also discussed the fact that the cedar trees near the north end of the rink are dead. The Committee decided that the city council should be asked to have the dead trees removed. The Committee unanimously passed a motion to recommend to the city council that netting be installed on the northwest end of the rink near the goal to help prevent pucks from flying out of the rink. Chair Michalk will obtain some cost estimates for the netting and report at the Committee's August meeting. The Committee expressed the opinion that the netting should be installed before the hockey rink is ready for use next winter.

**Tighe-Schmitz Future Planning.** The Committee discussed a tour that members Michalk, Simmons, Arsenault, and Hulett, along with council members Justin McCarthy and Kathy Weier, took of Tighe-Schmitz Park on June 26 with Lori Teller of the Washington Conservation District and Molly Nelson of the Rice Creek Watershed District. Arsenault summarized the tour and the discussion that occurred. At the tour, the group explored possible projects that might be undertaken at the park and the likelihood of grant funding. More specifically, the group focused on issues related to underground pipes in the park that collect runoff, rain gardens on the west side of the park, drainage routes, and ideas for restoration of a wetland near the swing set. It was mentioned during the tour that

the cause of the trees dying on the north end of the hockey rink could be the excessive water that has accumulated in the area around the trees.

The Committee discussed an email from Lori Tella that Simmons received just a short time before the meeting, informing the Parks Committee that a meeting of the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) was scheduled for August 1, at which BWSR would discuss potential grants for watershed enhancement projects in and around the White Bear Lake area in the 2024-25 program year. Both Molly Nelson of the Rice Creek Watershed District and Lori Tella of the Washington Conservation District will be in attendance at the meeting to describe and advocate for various projects of interest to their organizations. Tella said that it would be good for Birchwood to be present at that meeting and to be prepared to present projects at Tighe-Schmitz Park that the City would like to be considered for grant funding.

The email had spreadsheets attached with information, including estimated costs, of five possible water quality projects affecting Tighe-Schmitz Park that could be eligible for grant funding. The total estimated cost for all five projects is about \$80,000. It is possible that grants could cover 90% of this cost, with the remaining 10% to be the responsibility of the City. A copy of these five spreadsheets is on file at city hall.

The Committee unanimously agreed that it would be prudent for the City to pursue these grant opportunities and to be available at the August 1 meeting to describe the projects and request that the projects be considered for grant funding. The Committee discussed that it would probably be necessary for the Council to hold a special meeting sometime in July so the City could go ahead with the application by August 1. Tella has advised the Committee that she would speak at the August 1 meeting on behalf of Birchwood and describe the projects if the Council is prepared to incur its share of the costs.

The Committee contacted Justin McCarthy by phone to advise him of the Committee's decision and the urgency of the Council deciding to pursue grant funding for Tighe-Schmitz projects. (Note: McCarthy had advised the Committee by email earlier in the evening that he had decided to not attend the meeting because of a Covid diagnosis in his family earlier that day.) McCarthy indicated that he would raise the matter with the Council and ask for a special meeting to consider appropriate action.

**Commemorative T-Shirt Ideas.** There was nothing to discuss.

**Path Improvements through Polly’s Park and Tree Planting.** The Committee discussed the fact that there is a lot of mulch at the park and wondered what was going to be done with it. The Committee expressed thanks for all those who helped plant a number of trees in the park.

**Rice Creek Watershed District Grant Opportunities.** The Committee decided this item was covered under the Tighe-Schmitz discussion and there was nothing further to add.

**General Maintenance.** There was no new discussion.

**Kay Beach Problems.** The Committee discussed a complaint that had been received about somebody digging a hole in the beach. The Committee thought complaints like this should be addressed by simply somebody filling in the hole. Committee members have also heard complaints about fishing on the dock at Kay Beach. The Committee discussed that it had recommended that the Council adopt an ordinance prohibiting fishing at Kay Beach, which the Council decided against, so this was a matter for the Council.

The Committee further discussed that some motor boat operators are still coming in to Kay Beach, which the Council did prohibit by ordinance. The Committee thought that there should be more than one buoy in the water near Kay Beach to prevent motor boats from coming in since the motors would get entangled in the buoy ropes. It was moved and seconded that the Committee recommend that the City put out at least one additional buoy and a buoy string between the buoys at Kay Beach. The motion carried unanimously. Arsenault volunteered to investigate the cost of such effort.

**Confirm Next Month’s Meeting and Identify Agenda Topics.** The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 20, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in city hall. No specific agenda topics were discussed beyond what was identified during the course of the meeting.

**Adjourn.** 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell  
Secretary